

COLLECTIONS OVERVIEWS

PHOTOGRAPHY

I. SCOPE

This overview covers original photography as well as books illustrated with original photographs, from early daguerreotype portraits to contemporary photojournalism, in both physical and digital formats. These often unique primary resource visual materials are for the most part found in the Prints & Photographs Division (P&P) and are also in the American Folklife Center, Asian, Manuscript, Geography and Map, Music, and other divisions. Books and serials about photography are in the general collections.

In terms of subject content, the photography collections complement nearly every Library of Congress collecting area overview from American History, European Studies, and Hispanic American Studies to Decorative Arts, Fine Arts, and Motion Pictures.

The Graphic Arts are covered in a separate Collection Overview, as are Architecture, Design, and Engineering graphic works.

II. SIZE

An estimated 13 million items make up the photographic collections, including prints, negatives, transparencies, and digital files.

(Source: Prints & Photographs Online Catalog, Guide Records)

The Library has over 21,000 books and serials on photography, according to OCLC.

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

Pictorial documentation of American history, culture, and creativity are the general research strengths for the photography collections. As the oldest repository for the visual arts in Washington, the Library of Congress has built one of the most comprehensive and diverse collections of photography in the United States. Photographs deposited for copyright from about 1870 – 1930s make P&P's photo collections truly unique. Most strongly represented are visual expressions of the achievements and concerns of the American peoples from 1839 (the year of photography's introduction) to the present. Secondarily, the Library has established strength in the documentation of historical events, individuals, and trends outside of the United States with emphasis on those having an important influence upon American history and government or on American

interests abroad. Additionally, the Library's collections serve as an important resource on the history and uses of photography in the United States.

IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

Documentation of the American Experience. The P&P's greatest strength is in its documentation of American history, politics and culture. The holdings include two of the monuments of American photography in the documentary tradition: Lewis Hine's National Child Labor Committee photographs, and the Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information archive. Additional areas of concentration include the archives of several stereograph companies, images of Native Americans, labor history, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, women's history, aviation, the AIDS pandemic, aviation, theater, and dance.

The history of American technology is addressed in the Collection Overview of Architecture, Design and Engineering.

Documentation of American Foreign Relations and Wars. P&P has photographs documenting foreign and international relations from a daguerreotype of Andrew Jackson, the first President after the introduction of photography, to an archive of photographs related to the September 11th terrorist attacks. The Library's archive of the Civil War includes work by the Mathew Brady studio, Alexander Gardner, George Barnard, and others, and many portraits of officers and troops by various photographers. The Gladstone collection of African-American military images complements these Civil War collections. The world wars are also well represented by military photographs and those made by private citizens documenting their own experiences. Documentation of other military actions is representative rather than comprehensive.

Documentation of American Photojournalism. In addition to coverage of wars, the strengths include the morgues of the Bain News Photo Service, the National Photo Service, and other early twentieth-century news picture agencies; the morgues of *Look* magazine and of the *U.S. News and World Report*, and the *New York World, Telegram, and Sun* newspapers, and the broadcast photographs from the television show, "Meet the Press." The Library also owns the archive of photojournalists Toni Frissell and Arthur Rothstein.

Landscape and the Built Environment. Historic landscape photographs from the 1860s and 1870s include Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs from Clarence King's Geologic and Geographic Survey of the Fortieth Parallel; Lt. George M. Wheeler's Geographical and Geological Surveys West of the 100th Meridian, and William Henry Jackson's photographs from the U.S. Geological Survey of the West, led by Ferdinand Vandever Hayden, that documented Yosemite National Park are collection strengths. The self-indexing U. S. Geographical File contains photographs of the United States and its territories from the 1870s to about 1940, many of them transferred from the Copyright

Office. Materials documenting the twentieth century American landscape include the Kent and Marcia Minichello Collection of Environmental Landscape Photography, the Water-in-the-West archive of the Truckee River/Pyramid Lake project by Robert Dawson and Peter Goin, and work by Mark Ruwedel.

The P&P owns the archives, or substantial portions of same, of several American architectural photographers Frances Benjamin Johnston, Samuel Gottscho, Theodor Horydczak, Sigurd Fisher, Philip Trager, and John Margolies. These document American architecture from the 1890s through the present.

American Pictorialist Photography. P&P holds materials fundamental to art photography in America. It has the archives of the influential American pictorialist photographers F. Holland Day and Clarence H. White, and a broad representation of the works of other figures of this artistic photography movement in the United States, including the Clarence H. White School, Alfred Stieglitz, Gertrude Kasebier, Doris Ulmann, Paul Outerbridge, and Laura Gilpin.

American Portrait Photography. Archives of several notable portrait photographers are held by P&P, including: the daguerreotype portraits of **Mathew** Brady; Arnold Genthe's portraits of American artists, literati, and society figures of the early twentieth century; Carl Van Vechten's portraits of American entertainers and literary and political figures from the 1930s - 1960s; and the Bernard Gotfryd portraits of politicians, actors and celebrities from the 1950s-1970s. In addition, P&P maintains an extensive browsing portrait file of photographs and other printed media of notable American and international personalities, up to about 1960, arranged alphabetically by person.

Photographic Documentation of Russia and other former Soviet republics, Slavic and Moslem Asia, from the 1850s to World War I. The Library has the most extensive existing public collection in the United States of photographs documenting this region. Notable are a number of photographic projects recording the people, landscape, and buildings of these regions, including: Roger Fenton's documentation of the troops and theatre of the Crimean War; a series of albums of the peoples, buildings, and life in Turkestan, early 1870s; and Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii's extensive photographic documentation of the Russian Empire just prior to World War I.

Photographic Documentation of the Middle East from the 1860s through World War I. The lands encompassed by the former Ottoman Empire were extensively documented by Western photographers in the late nineteenth century. The Library has the most extensive American public collection of photographs produced of the region during the period.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Digitized versions of many photographs are available in the Prints and Photographs Online Catalog (PPOC).

Many photographs also appear in Library exhibitions displayed on the Library website.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

Collections that cover such a wide range of subjects will inevitably have gaps and weaknesses. For example,

P&P, like most other American collecting institutions, is today engaged in a particular effort to better represent the significant achievements and contributions to American history and culture of all ethnic and racial groups.

There are relatively few photographs created after 1975.

There is little modern photographic documentation of certain regions for which the Library has maintained strong area studies interest, such as Latin America (except for Panama), Asia, and Africa.

Abstract art and copy photographs generally are considered out of scope.